1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen from about January to March and both the kernels and their sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them. The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by the annual cycle of oecological changes. Without grain in the wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.